Transcript for **Violence on the Job**

Protect Yourself *(episode 2)*

Violence is a serious workplace hazard that demands focused attention.

Because we have a diverse economy, with all kinds of jobs there will never be a single violence prevention strategy that will work in every setting. But by examining the specific situations and activities that put people at risk, employers and workers can together begin to develop a comprehensive violence prevention program.

The goal of any such program should be to implement a system of controls that addresses the unique needs of the workplace. We'll talk about how to do that next.

Strategies for preventing workplace violence fall into three categories: environmental, administrative, and behavioral. Environmental controls are often found in workplaces where cash is exchanged. Measures such as using locked drop safes, keeping small amounts of cash on hand, and posting signs to this effect are used to deter robbery.

[OSBORNE] We have a limit in the register that the register will automatically notify the cashier or clerk to make a drop in order to keep the money low in the till and keep it unattractive.

[NARRATOR]
Accepting credit and debit cards also reduces the amount of available cash, especially in retail settings and taxicabs. Some safety advocates have proposed using prepaid cab fare cards similar to those used in subways.

Physical separation of workers from customers and the general public should also be considered. Creating distance between workers and others may reduce the chances of a physical attack. One way to achieve this is to increase the height and depth of counters. Bullet-resistant enclosures and barriers provide physical protection in a range of environments, from taxicabs to emergency rooms and social service agencies. When selecting methods of separation, companies must take into account the need to conduct business in a reasonable fashion. A safety device that is obtrusive or impractical may be self-defeating because it frustrates workers and customers.

Visibility and lighting are also important environmental considerations. High-risk areas should be made clearly visible to as many people as possible. Ample outdoor lighting is also essential. Access to the workplace needs to be addressed as well. Obviously, access to work areas by non-employees should be restricted. Some things to consider include the number of entry and exit points, the use of panic- bar doors that allow doors to be locked from the outside but still allow exit, and areas on the premises where potential attackers can hide. Keep in mind that a trespasser can be hidden by a variety of environmental characteristics such as landscaping, signage and outlying buildings. And of course there are numerous safety devices on the market to help secure the work environment. For example: closed-circuit cameras, alarms, key-card entry systems in fixed workplaces, cell phones and other communication equipment in mobile workplaces and trouble lights and geographic locating devices in cabs.

[TINSLEY] All of our employees are aware of where the quickest escape is for an exit we also have video cameras and very bright lighting

[OSBORNE] approx 15 years ago we had an average of 158 robberies a year as we implemented closed circuit TV and alarm systems throughout the stores we cut our robberies down to approx 58 last year and so far half of this year we are at 18 for the company

[MATEO] We ere able to get Mayor Giuliani to give the industry 5 million dollars to help protect the industry. By putting in partitions and or cameras and making it law that one of these two items had to be in these cars. Today armed robberies are down from 2500 a month to maybe 2 or 300 hundred a month, murders are down from 25 a year to maybe 1 or 2 a year.

[NARRATOR]
Administrative controls are workplace policies and practices designed to reduce the risk of violence. Administrative controls include appropriate staffing. Security experts recommend the use of guards or receptionists to screen visitors and otherwise control access to work areas. In retail, service, and health care settings, increasing the number of workers on duty at certain times should be considered. Work practices that increase the risk of assault on workers should be thoroughly examined and revised as needed. These practices include carrying money or valuables and disposing of or storing materials in outlying areas of the worksite.

Employers should develop an overall policy on workplace violence that has a clear message: violence will not be tolerated and is never a part of doing business. This policy should provide for reporting violent incidents, threats, and behaviors whether they originate outside the organization or within. Methods for defusing potentially violent situations and instruction on how to use security devices should also be covered. In addition, violence policies should include provisions for medical care and psychological support following a violent incident, as well as training . . .

. . . which brings us to the third violence prevention strategy: behavioral.

Providing employees with training in non-violent response and conflict resolution is believed to reduce the risk that volatile situations will escalate to physical violence. An effective training program will address hazards associated with specific tasks and appropriate prevention strategies. Ensuring that all employees know how to use safety devices properly is also critical. Increased employee knowledge and adherence to administrative controls will result in behavior that contributes to a safer workplace.

[TINSLEY] I really think its important for all our employees to be educated on it because I know that if it was one of my family members or one of my friends that was hurt for that case even murdered on the job it would devastate me and I want everybody else to understand that.

[NARRATOR]

Any program for preventing workplace violence should incorporate these three strategies.

A successful program also requires a commitment by management and active employee involvement. To learn what some people are doing to prevent violence at work, check out the case study, accessible through the main menu. When addressing workplace violence or any other safety issue, prevention is the ultimate goal.

Any threats of violence should be reported and dealt with right away. Ignoring potential problems or failing to take them seriously can have deadly consequences. And in case violence does occur, employers should be ready to utilize all available internal and community resources to minimize its effects. Most important, remember that workplace violence can be prevented with appropriate policies and controls.

It's definitely not something that workers should have to live with—or just hope never happens to them. A safe workplace doesn't happen by accident. It requires that we take action to protect ourselves and others.

I'm Ken Strunk. Stay safe.